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Former African pastor now serves as Soldier, cook with 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

**Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield
MND-B PAO**

BAGHDAD – Many Soldiers join the United States Army as a way of saying thanks, while others feel it is their patriotic duty to serve the country that has offered them a life full of endless opportunities. Regardless of the reason, thousands of Soldiers are taking or re-taking the oath to defend and protect the United States of America during this time of war.

Pfc. Rudolph Foliwe didn't have much time to take advantage of the opportunities for which he came to the States before he joined the U.S. Army and began his career as a cook.

Foliwe was born and raised in the Republic of Cameroon, a small country in west-central Africa, known for its native music and its successful national soccer team. English and French are the official languages of Cameroon, and compared to other African countries, its economy is stable.

Foliwe pursued an education in international affairs before attending three years of bible school and becoming a pastor in Cameroon.

At the age of 33 he decided to travel to the United States.

“Africans love to travel,” he said, in his thick accent with a lively smile on his face, “and I wanted to experience a better way of life. People in the United States are blessed.”

He arrived in Boston July 7, 2007, and shipped off to basic training October 18, 2007.

“I have great admiration for the U.S. Army,” he said. “A friend of mine used to always tell me about the Army and told me that if I ever get to the United States, I should join.”

Now, less than one year later, Foliwe blissfully prepares and serves food to his fellow Soldiers from Company D “Dark Knights,” 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, at an abandoned potato chip factory in New Baghdad used by the company as their combat out post.

“I feel that the best way to begin my life as an immigrant is to fight for the country. This way, I can truly understand the benefits from the blessings of the country,” he said. “It’s a great foundation to set up my life and a positive image for my future children.”

Although Foliwe served many years as a pastor in Cameroon, the option to serve as a chaplain in the Army was not available because his education didn’t translate into a degree in the U.S.; a bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited school is necessary

to become a chaplain. He made the decision to become a cook, choosing to physically feed others in place of spiritually “feeding” them. Because of his religious beliefs, he wanted to serve a vital role in the military but in a job more focused on serving others than on combat.

Not only was Foliwe new to the Army, he had little experience cooking.

“The only thing I had ever cooked before was rice and eggs,” he said.

By the time he arrived to his unit in Baghdad in late June, he had developed the minimum skills taught to be an Army cook in Advanced Individual Training.

“He was fresh out of AIT and had no experience in cooking out in the field. Everything was new to him,” said Spc. Marcus Reichelderfer, a native of Lima, Ohio, who also serves as a cook with Co. D, 1st Bn., 66th Armored Regt. “In a month and a half, he’s improved from zero to 100. He’s completely competent to run a shift by himself.”

Foliwe said he feels his job in the Army is important and he receives satisfaction knowing that what he does contributes to the overall mission and directly to individual Soldiers.

“There is a strong relationship between food and motivation,” he said. “When (Soldiers) eat well, they are happy and motivated to do their job.”

Although he hasn’t served much time in the Army, Foliwe has faced many obstacles, with the language barrier being the most difficult to overcome. Although he speaks fluent English, his accent is thick and sometimes hard to understand, but he’s not discouraged. Instead he strives to learn about the American culture from other Soldiers as well as teach them about his native culture.

“People are not stupid because they have different accents or speak different languages,” he said. “I think that the Soldiers here are realizing this and becoming more accepting of people and their different cultures.”

“While we’re deployed, we’re all going through this together. All we have is each other, and we’re all the same.”

Foliwe will be applying for citizenship at the end of September. By next year, his goal is to not only be a United States Soldier – but also to be a United States citizen.



Serving chow.

BAGHDAD – Pfc. Rudolph Foliwe, a native of Cameroon, Africa, who serves as a cook with Company D “Dark Riders,” 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, serves dinner to a fellow Soldier at an abandoned potato chip factory in New Baghdad Sept. 4. The factory now serves as his company’s combat out post. Foliwe lived in the United States for a little more than three months before joining the U.S. Army as a cook.

(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO)



Chow time.

BAGHDAD – Pfc. Rudolph Foliwe, a native of Cameroon, Africa, who serves as a cook with Company D “Dark Riders,” 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, serves dinner to a fellow Soldier at an abandoned potato chip factory in New Baghdad Sept. 4. The factory now serves as his company’s combat out post. Foliwe lived in the United States for a little more than three months before joining the U.S. Army as a cook.

(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO)



Frozen in the desert.

BAGHDAD – Pfc. Rudolph Foliwe, a native of Cameroon, Africa, who serves as a cook with Company D “Dark Riders,” 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, searches the portable freezer for food to prepare dinner for his fellow Soldiers at an abandoned potato chip factory in New Baghdad Sept. 4. The factory now serves as his company’s combat out post. Foliwe lived in the United States for a little more than three months before joining the U.S. Army as a cook.

(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO)